Transition Tensions Spill Over at CIA, Senate Committee

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The tensions of the transition to Ronald Reagan are spilling over at the Central Intelligence Agency.

The head of the president-elect's CIA team was lecturing his men just last week about the importance of sticking to policy questions and avoiding "hit lists" of officials to be ousted — when it turned out that two of the transition team were themselves being dismissed from their regular jobs in the wake of complaints from the CIA.

One member of the transition team, sources say, reported that he and at least one of his colleagues had just been ordered fired from their full-time jobs on the staff of the Senate Intelligence Committee.

The Republican staffers — Angelo Codevilla, an appointee of Sen. Malcolm Wallop (R-Wyo.), and Mark Schneider, who owes his job to Sen. Jake Garn (R-Utah) — were reportedly flabbergasted at first word of their dismissals. Both were said to have informed their senators of their temporary duty paving the way for a new regime at Langley.

But no one, it seems, had told the prospective new chairman of the committee, Sen. Barry Goldwater (R-Ariz.).

According to several sources, one

high-ranking CIA official, legislative counsel Fred Hitz, had expressed his chagrin to Goldwater's chief staff man on the intelligence committee, Earl D. Eisenhower.

"We [at the CIA] were concerned that the separation of powers [doctrine] had been done some violence to," Hitz said yesterday in confirming the call. "When the names of the transition team were announced last Friday morning [Nov. 14], we had some concern, as a management body, that several were employes of the legislative branch."

As a result, Hitz said, CIA officials were "concerned" that Codevilla and Schneider might be getting information as transition team members that the CIA might not want to share with staffers for the Senate committee charged with overseeing the agency.

However, Hitz added, "I did not make any suggestion that they be cashiered. Hitz did not cause them to be fired. We were just, as I say, concerned.... That's the sum and substance of it. I tend to regard it as tempest in a teapot."

It isn't clear just what Eisenhower told Goldwater, but the senator responded swiftly, dispatching letters of dismissal by that afternoon. He said he acted as vice chairman of the committee after finding that Chairman Birch Bayh (D-Ind.) was out of town.

Goldwater said it wasn't the separation-of-powers business that bothered him. Rather, he said, "This committee is so sensitive that we can't allow staff members to wander around town and sit behind desks" without clearing it with committee leaders. "I just wanted to make it perfectly clear that I'm not going to stand for it."

Goldwater said Garn has since spoken to him and made clear he wants his man back on the committee staff, and he has returned. "I said, 'That's fine with me,' " Goldwater said, having made his point. But he said Wallop's man, Codevilla, has yet to return.

Garn could not be reached for comment, but his administrative assistant, Jeff Bingham, said the brouhaha "grew out of a pure misunderstanding of where they needed to report their plans." He said Schneider had obtained Garn's full approval.

"He [Garn] didn't tell me that," Goldwater said later.

Initially, it was believed that yet another Senate committee staffer, Kenneth deGraffenreid, who serves at the pleasure of Sen. John Chafee (R-R. I.), was also being bumped since he, too, is on the CIA transition team for Reagan. But Chafee said that "Ken was never fired" because he "got approval from me and from Earl Eisenhower's assistant."

One well-placed Senate source suggested still another motive for the CIA complaints that touched everything off.

"At least some of these [Republican] staffers are pushing legislation that would break the agency up.... They're not exactly 'persona grata' to an agency that's about to be torn apart."

In any event, the episode is undoubtedly among the "complexities" that were perplexing the head of Reagan's CIA transition team, Laurence Silberman, before he quit this week. Silberman said immediate cause of his departure was a fall down the stairs of his San Francisco home that left him with a broken right foot. But on top of that, he said, "the situation [at CIA] is getting too complex."